

XVII.—*Notes on the Ornithology of Spain.*

By Lord LILFORD, F.L.S., F.Z.S.

(Plate V.)

THE birds of Spain appear to be less known than those of any other part of Europe of equal extent. The only authorities on the subject to which I am able to refer are, Captain Widdrington\*, Dr. A. E. Brehm†, Mr. Bury‡, Don Antonio Machado§, and two or three contributors to the 'Journal of Arts and Sciences of Madrid.' In my two short visits to Spain, I have of course not been able to acquire sufficient knowledge of her avifauna to write with any authority on the subject; but having taken careful notes of all that I did see, I am inclined to think that the result of my observations may prove of interest to some of the readers of the 'Ibis.'

My first visit to the country was in August 1856, in the Royal Yacht Squadron's schooner 'Claymore'; on which occasion, sailing from Falmouth, we first touched at Corunna, and thence, avoiding Portugal on account of the cholera which was raging at Lisbon, we sailed to Cadiz and all the principal Spanish ports on the Mediterranean, including Palma and Port Mahon in the Balearic Islands. As we merely stayed a few days at each place, and the weather was intensely hot, my opportunities for studying birds were not many; but I saw enough to render me very anxious to revisit Spain, and I may add that, to my mind, a more interesting country in every way can hardly exist. A second visit in the spring of 1864 only confirmed my previous favourable impression of Spain, her people, her climate, her beauties of nature and art, and last, but by no means least in my opinion, her ornithological capabilities. As may be expected in a country so extensive and of such diversified geological conformation, no observations on natural productions can apply to all parts; and I may state that my own notes refer almost exclusively to Andalucia

\* Sketches in Spain. By Capt. S. E. Cook. London and Paris: 1834.

† Naturhistorische Zeitung, vol. iii. Dresden: 1857.

‡ Zoologist, 1848, p. 1958.

§ Catalogo de las aves observadas en algunas provincias de Andalucia. Sevilla: 1854.

and the neighbourhood of Valencia, which localities in birds are probably richer than, or at least as rich as, any in the country. I only speak of the other provinces on the authority of others; for instance, Señor M. de la Paz Graells, Curator of the Natural History department at the Museum of Madrid; and Señor Cisternas, who fills the same place at that of Valencia. Many portions of the interior of Spain, such as La Mancha, and parts of Murcia and the Castiles, are unfavourable to all but a few forms of bird life, being arid and treeless; but even in these regions the observer may meet with species rare in other parts of Europe, such as the two species of Sand-Grouse, *Pterocles arenarius* and *P. alchata*, and no doubt many other forms usually ascribed to the fauna of North America rather than to that of Europe. Before I visited Spain, which country, *par parenthèse*, had always been the subject of my youthful day and night dreams, I was assured by many of my acquaintances (I cannot call them friends) that not only was there nothing to be had there in the way of sport, but that there were literally *no* birds except Larks and Hoopoes; in fact, that the country possessed no attractions beyond a few ruins, some good pictures, the bull-fights, and the beauty of the female population. As to sport I can say little, never having been in Spain at the proper seasons; but I can speak as to the abundance and variety of game in the unfrequented districts; and I trust that the following notes will prove that Spain "has something still to show" in the way of birds, although it certainly is true that, in travelling by rail or diligence, very few are to be seen throughout a great extent of country. I suppose I must make a clean breast of it, and plead guilty to an infatuation in favour of everything Spanish, except her bonds and coupons; but I have at all events good argument for this weakness, if weakness it be, having made many friends, and shaken off a bitter enemy, viz. rheumatism, in Spain; and ill would it become me not to bear testimony to the extreme courtesy I have met with from all classes; to the great pleasure I have experienced in listening to, reading, and learning the glorious language, and the enjoyment of riding over the fragrant *dehesas* and rugged *sierras* of Andalucia. Even the *gazpacho* and *olla* have a charm for me; and I aver that the flavour of garlic recalls

to my mind many a pleasant evening passed in divers Spanish ventas listening to stories of *la caza mayor y menor*, and inquiring and learning many things concerning the haunts and habits of my feathered friends. But I am forgetting that this paper is not intended as a eulogy of Spain and the Spaniards, but an attempt to add to our knowledge of her ornithology; so I will begin at the beginning, and tell what I know about the Birds of Prey.

My first introduction to the Griffon Vulture (*Gyps fulvus* ? *occidentalis*) in his native haunts took place on the banks of the Guadalquivir below Seville, where we saw a party of at least forty of these birds regaling upon a dead horse; they took very little notice of the steamer, apparently knowing that, on account of the shoal water, they were just out of gunshot. I have since met with this Vulture in all parts of Spain which I have visited, in great abundance, particularly in April 1864, in the Sierra de la Palmitera near Marbella, where we were encamped for two days in pursuit of Ibex (*Capra hispanica*). I cannot take upon myself to say whether the Griffon Vulture of Southern Spain belongs to the form *occidentalis* of Schlegel; but I imagine that it does, as all the individuals that I have seen there present precisely the same characters as the Griffons of the island of Sardinia, which I find Count Salvadori, in his most interesting Catalogue\*, refers without hesitation to that race. I may here mention that by far the majority of the Griffon Vultures of Epirus are extremely light in colour, and, I think, somewhat superior in size to those of Spain and Sardinia. Brehm states that all the specimens of this Vulture which he saw in Spain belonged to the *occidentalis* form. The Spaniards call all the large Vultures *Buitre*, occasionally distinguishing the present species as *Buitre franciscano* from the Cinereous Vulture (*Vultur monachus*), which they term *Buitre negro*; this last species is not uncommon in Andalusia, though not so abundant as in the island of Sardinia, where it is perhaps the most frequent of the *Vulturidæ*. I observed a pair or two in company with the Griffons, in the mountains near Marbella, as mentioned above, and near Cordova I several times observed it. This bird appears to be more fond of trees than the

\* Catalogo degli Uccelli di Sardegna. Milano: 1864.

last species, and apparently does not live in such large companies. Señor Graells informed me that *V. monachus* is not uncommon in the neighbourhood of Madrid, and it also occurs in the Pyrenees. Every specimen of this Vulture that I have seen alive or dead has the points of the tail-feathers worn bare to the shafts, a characteristic which may be seen very distinctly when the bird is soaring overhead against the clear blue sky of Andalusia or Sardinia. I may here mention that I was assured that this vulture, in Sardinia, does not lay till the end of March, whilst *G. fulvus* certainly has eggs in February. I state this only on the authority of the Sarde shepherds, who are naturally well acquainted with both species.

A fine adult pair of Lämmergeyers (*Gypaetus occidentalis*) visited the neighbourhood of our camp near Marbella in April. The Cazadores assured me that this species often drives the Ibex over a precipice, and feasts upon the bones after the other Vultures have devoured the flesh. The mountain-chains of Andalusia are well adapted to the habits of this bird; and, although it cannot properly be called a common bird, it is found in pairs throughout the Serrania de Ronda, as also in the Sierra Nevada, and in the Pyrenees. There is a very fine specimen in the University Museum of Valencia, which was killed close to that city—a very unlikely locality, as the surrounding country is flat and richly cultivated. Machado mentions this bird as rare in the Sierra Morena; but as he also states that *Caprimulgus europæus* haunts the tobacco-manufactory at Seville in great numbers, I think we need not place any great amount of faith on his powers of observation; in fact, it is very unusual to meet any Spaniard who cares for, or occupies himself about, any branch of Natural History, and any bird they do not see every day is to them a wonder. I believe the Lämmergeyer of Spain undoubtedly belongs to the race *occidentalis* of Schlegel; though, if size is to be considered as a real distinction, the Andalusian bird fully equals the largest I ever saw in Turkey, or the Italian Alps. The Spaniards call this species *Quebrantahuesos*, i. e. Bone-cracker; I have also heard it called *Aguila*; but it is a well-known bird in its mountain haunts, and generally distinguished by the shepherds and Cazadores by the first-mentioned name.



All the specimens which I saw in Spain had the breast conspicuously tawny-red. I cannot help still thinking that some of the birds of this genus, which I saw in Epirus\*, were of a new species, from their remarkably small size and certain differences of flight, &c., although there is no doubt that the true *G. barbatus* occurs frequently in those parts. I was told of the existence of two eyries of *Quebrantahuesos* in the mountains of Istan, in Andalusia (this was in April); my informant added that they had not laid! and as I unfortunately do not possess the rock-climbing skill of certain brothers of the 'Ibis,' and felt convinced that no inducement would persuade the natives to attempt a siege, I did not go out of my way to inspect the localities. The Lämmergeyer appears to live on terms of distant courtesy with his neighbours, the Griffon Vultures; he evidently is not of a sociable nature, though doubtless he possesses many domestic virtues, and seldom travels, or even goes out to dine, unaccompanied by his mate.

I have generally found that the lower orders in Spain refer the inquirer to the province of Estremadura for every beast or bird concerning which they know little or nothing. "En Estremadura hay muchos," has been said to me about almost every bird of the country—the truth being, I suppose, that Estremadura is comparatively little known, and contains a great expanse of uninhabited wastes and forests which are apparently, as yet, quite as little known, ornithologically, as the parts beyond Jordan, before the explorations of Mr. Tristram and his friends. It is difficult to understand why Spain should be so little known to naturalists: there is no real difficulty or danger in visiting every corner of the land, and there can, I imagine, be few countries which so well repay any slight amount of discomfort in the way of bad accommodation, number of bed-fellows, and the like. I can state on my word of honour, that the flea of Spain is a trifle when compared to his cousin of Sardinia, and both sink into insignificance before him of Tunis. But again I am forgetting myself, and must bear in mind that, although it is difficult to travel in Spain without becoming in some degree acquainted with the insect-world, I am not writing an entomological paper.

\* Ibis, 1860, p. 2.

The Egyptian Vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*) is very common in Andalucia, and probably all other parts of Spain, in the summer, and follows the plough, as observed by Captain Widdrington. In fact, during my last visit to Andalucia, in almost every instance, when I observed ploughing, there were a pair or more of these Vultures waiting about, and picking up the grubs turned up by the ploughshare. They are very fearless of man, and are conspicuous objects against the tawny-brown hills so characteristic of Southern Spanish scenery. The Spanish name for this species is *Alimocha* or *Aguila blanca*.

Eagles of many species abound in Andalucia, one of the most common being the Imperial (*Aquila heliaca*), called in Spanish *Aguila real*. I often saw this bird last year in the neighbourhood of Seville; the museum there contains several specimens, and I was offered a fine individual alive, in full adult plumage and in pretty good feather, though he was kept chained at the top of his owner's house in an apartment usually devoted, I fancy, to anything but birds. I very much regretted that I was not able to accept him, but as I was travelling about the country I could not well carry him with me, and most reluctantly left him to his fate. Brehm mentions this species as occasionally found near Madrid, where I obtained a good specimen in May 1864. The Imperial Eagle appears to be rare in the east of Spain, as it is not to be found in the collection of the Museum of Valencia, nor could I hear of it at Barcelona, Alicante, or Cartagena.

The Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetus*) is certainly less common in Andalucia than the last-mentioned species. I have observed it near Granada, and all the collections I have seen in Spain contain specimens. I know nothing of the *Aquila fuscapilla* of Brehm. A Golden Eagle crossed the road not more than thirty yards ahead of me, in hot pursuit of a Little Bustard (*Otis tetrax*), as I was riding from Alcalá la Real to Castro del Rio, in April 1864. I shouted and rode at him, and saved the life of the Bustard, at all events for some time, as the Eagle sailed indignantly off, and the quarry plunged into a field of standing wheat. The White-tailed Eagle (*Haliaeetus albicilla*) I never saw alive in Spain, but Señor Graells has met with it more

than once in, I think, New Castile. I have also heard of its occurrence near Valencia.

The Spotted Eagle (*Aquila navia*) appears to be rare in Spain, and I never saw it alive in any part of the country. The Seville Museum contained a fine specimen, and I found another in the collection at Valencia. I cannot find any mention of this species in any of the Spanish catalogues of the birds of Andalucia or Valencia, nor is it noticed by Brehm.

Of the subject of the accompanying Plate (Plate V.), the Tawny Eagle (*Aquila navioides*), I find no mention in any work on Spain to which I have been able to refer, nor did I meet with it in any collection in that country; but I am quite certain that I have seen it several times in Andalucia—notably, near one of the stations on the railway between Seville and Cadiz, and again near Cordova, in April 1864. On the first occasion, an Eagle rose from the railway embankment and settled in a tree within forty yards of me, which Eagle, at first sight, puzzled me considerably; it was exactly in the plumage of the upper figure in the Plate, which, so far as I am aware, does not belong to any other Eagle, unless, perhaps, to *Aquila heliaca*. But this bird was considerably smaller than that species, of which I saw two on the same day in immature plumage; nor, indeed, do I recollect having seen a specimen of the Imperial Eagle so uniform in colouring. I made the acquaintance of *Aquila navioides* at Tunis, where it is frequent; and I have, at the present time, three of this species alive in my possession, from two of which Mr. Wolf took the sketches for the Plate. The darker bird I have had for nearly three years, and he or she (for I am ignorant of the sex) has altered very little in appearance during that time, though the dark markings have, I think, somewhat increased in breadth and number. The light-coloured specimen, which I obtained last year, I consider to be an immature bird, and, from its small size, it is, I think, a male. Mr. J. H. Gurney informs me that he received two specimens of *Aquila navioides* from Spain, which are now in the Norwich Museum; and I have no doubt that, though hitherto unnoticed, it is not uncommon in the south of that country. It is found in the neighbourhood of Tangier, and my three living birds were all said to have been



J. Wolf del. et lith.

M. & N. Hanhart imp.

AQUILA NAEVIOIDES.



received from Mogador. Mr. Gurney states that the Eagle procured by Captain Blakiston in the Crimea, upon whose authority Dr. Bree has introduced *Aquila navioides* into his 'Birds of Europe'\*, is, in fact, a specimen of *Aquila navia*; so that the only recorded occurrence of this Eagle in Europe, besides those mentioned above as received by Mr. Gurney from Spain, is, so far as I know, to be found in the 'Revue et Magasin de Zoologie' for 1854 (pp. 8 and 351); but in the same volume (p. 160) it will be also found that the accuracy of the statement referred to is disputed, and the supposed two specimens of *Aquila navioides* are made out to belong to another species. My birds are remarkably tame, and live in amity with each other, and with a fine adult Bonelli's Eagle (*Aquila bonellii*), which I have kept alive for nearly five years. This last-named Eagle is common in Andalucia, where it frequents the marshes, as observed in Epirus† and Sardinia. The Seville Museum contains several specimens; and it is mentioned by Brehm as observed in the provinces of Valencia, Marcia, Granada, and Madrid. I was informed that one of the specimens which I saw stuffed at Seville was caught upon its nest in a pine-tree, not far from that city; but on my inquiring what had become of the eggs, the usual "quien sabe?" was all the answer I could obtain.

Bonelli's Eagle is almost always to be found in pairs, and has a very different flight from that of any other European Eagle; it is known in Andalucia as *Perdicero* and *Aguila blanca*, which last appellation is indeed given to many other species, and particularly to the Booted Eagle (*Aquila pennata*), which is very common near Seville, and is, I believe, found in most parts of Spain: the Museums of Madrid, Granada, Seville, and Valencia contain many specimens. Señor Graells informed me that the Booted Eagle breeds in May, in the neighbourhood of Madrid, and usually places its nest on a poplar; in the country round Seville it builds in the Pinares or pine-groves, and is reported to lay only two eggs, of a dirty-white colour with indistinct rufous markings. This information was given me by a sportsman of Seville, who said he had often seen the nest and eggs of

\* Ibis, 1859, p. 88.

† Ibis, 1860, p. 5.

this species, and certainly *did* know the bird well, distinguishing it at once from the Buzzards and Kites by its feathered legs, and remarking truly, "no hay otra aguilá tan pequeña." No one, I think, who has ever seen this Eagle on the wing can mistake it for a Buzzard, as its flight is very different, and its cry, frequently repeated, as unlike the wail of a *Buteo* as possible. It appears to prefer open country and isolated groups of trees to large extents of forest. The natives told me that this Eagle is the scourge of the Quails which abound in Andalucia. It is no doubt the bird referred to by Señor Machado as *Falco lagopus*, as all the specimens which I saw in the Museum of Seville under his charge were ticketed with that name; he gives *Milano blanco* as the common Spanish name for *Aquila pennata*; but my own experience goes to prove that that name is generally applied to the male Hen-Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*). I find no mention of the Booted Eagle in a catalogue of the birds of Santiago and other parts of Galicia. I once saw the Short-toed Eagle (*Circus caetus gallicus*) soaring in the air near Figueras in Catalonia; and a bird-stuffer at Barcelona had a fine specimen alive, but badly wounded, which was obtained in that neighbourhood. I saw this species in the Museum of Madrid, but Señor Graells informed me that it is not common in Castile. The Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) I never saw alive in Spain, but it occurs occasionally at Valencia.

The Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), in Spanish *Halcon*, I saw several times about the Guadalquivir below Seville, and again in Minorca; in which last locality I observed what was evidently a family party of five individuals in October 1856. This was close to the town of Port Mahon. I notice that Brehm mentions *Falco peregrinoides*, Temm., as occurring in Spain; and if, as I think, Temminck's bird is identical with *Falco barbarus*, I have strong grounds for believing that Brehm is right.

All the Falcons I saw in the south of Spain were notably smaller than an average Peregrine; and I well remember remarking that it was curious that I should see nothing but male birds, as they seemed to be. A specimen of Temminck's *Falco peregrinoides* exists, according to Brehm, in the Museum of Granada, and another in a private collection at Murcia. I am not aware

that *F. barbarus* has as yet been admitted into the list of European birds; but I feel little doubt that the Common Falcon of Southern Spain belongs to that form, though the real *F. peregrinus* also occurs, as, for instance, as mentioned above, in the island of Minorca. I was assured by Señor Graells that the Lanner (*Falco lanarius*) and La Marmora's Falcon (*Hypotriorchis eleanora*) have to his knowledge occurred in Spain—the former species in Catalonia, and, I think, the latter in Murcia or Valencia. For particulars of Brehm's *Falco gracilis* I must refer my readers to that author's account of the Birds of Spain, published in the 'Naturhistorische Zeitung,' merely stating, as my own opinion, that this *F. gracilis* is only *Hypotriorchis eleanora* in one of its many now well-known variations of plumage. The Hobby (*Hypotriorchis subbuteo*) is not uncommon in Andalucia, where I have several times seen it, and is found more or less commonly throughout Spain during the summer. The Orange-legged Hobby (*Erythropus vespertinus*) I saw once in Andalucia, and there is a specimen in the Museum of Valencia, but it is not, I think, a common bird in any part of Spain.

The two species of Kestrel, *Falco tinnunculus* and *F. tinnunculoides*, are, I think, in April and May, the commonest birds in Andalucia, with perhaps the exception of the Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*). Every church-steeple, belfry, and tower, every town and village, every ruin swarms with them; I believe I am not at all beyond the mark in saying that I have seen three or four hundred on wing at the same moment on more than one occasion, particularly at Castro del Rio in April 1864. I think the Little Kestrel is somewhat the most abundant of the two species. The cry of these pretty birds is as certain to strike the ear in the towns of Andalucia, as the twang of the guitar and click of the castanets. Both species of Kestrel continue on wing long after dark. In the delicious summer nights of Southern Spain, when all the louder sounds of human life are hushed, and nothing breaks the silence but the monotonous note of the little Scops Owl, and the "wet my lips" of innumerable Quails, I have occasionally been roused from a reverie by the cry of the Kestrels over my head, seemingly passing and repassing, and carrying on their usual evolutions in spite of the darkness. Whilst on this

subject, may I ask if any of my readers have ever remarked the extraordinary cries of birds during the night? It has happened to me on several occasions after dark, in different parts of Europe, to hear very large flights of birds, with whose notes (in the majority of instances) I was totally unacquainted, pass over at no great distance. Once, in one of the quadrangles of Christ-Church, Oxford, I listened for at least ten minutes to the continuous cry of a flock of birds—which cry I can only liken, and that very slightly, to the screech of the Night-Heron (*Nycticorax griseus*). Again, on the Esplanade at Corfu, in the summer of 1858, my companion and I were suddenly startled from the somewhat drowsy contemplation of our cigarettes by an uproar as if all the feathered inhabitants of the great Acherusian marsh had met in conflict over our heads: this took place in July, about 1 A.M., when we were lengthening our days according to Tom Moore's well-known precept. It would be quite impossible to convey anything approaching to a just idea of the Babel of sounds, many of which neither of us had ever before heard; and I have no conception what birds can have produced the greater part of them; but I recognized the wail of the Curlew, the cry of more than one species of Tern, and the laugh of some *Larus*. In Southern Spain the Lesser Kestrel occasionally remains through the winter, but the greater number leave the country about October, and reappear in April. The Spaniards call the Common Kestrel *Cernicalo*, and the Lesser *Primilla* or *Buaro*: this latter name is sometimes applied to the Hobby also. The Merlin (*Falco æsalon*), in Spanish *Esmerejon*, is common in winter, and well known throughout Spain.

I have once or twice seen the Gos-Hawk (*Astur palumbarius*) in Andalucia, and also in Catalonia. Brehm mentions that, although he never saw this species alive, he met with it in all the museums which he visited in Spain. The Spaniards call the Gos-Hawk *Azor*. The Sparrow-Hawk (*Accipiter nisus*) is common all over Spain, where it is known as *Gavilán*. The Common Buzzard (*Buteo vulgaris*) is often found in Andalucia, and, according to Brehm, in most other parts of Spain. I have reason to think that *Buteo desertorum* is to be found in Western Spain and Portugal, though I cannot at present state this with cer-



tainty. The Honey-Buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*) is common in most parts of Spain, on passage. I observed a flight of many hundreds of this species crossing the Straits of Gibraltar from Spain to Africa in September 1856, and I shortly afterwards obtained a fine specimen alive at Malaga. Vidal, in his 'Catalogue of the Birds of the Albufera of Valencia,' remarks that, although the Honey-Buzzard is very common there in its immature dress, it is extremely rare to meet with an adult specimen. I never heard of the Rough-legged Buzzard (*Archibuteo lagopus*) in Spain, except on the authority of Don A. Machado; and, as mentioned above, all the birds so named by him in the Museum of Seville are specimens of *Aquila pennata*. The Common and Black Kites, *Milvus ictinus* and *M. ater*, are common in Andalusia—the latter perhaps more so than the former, in the neighbourhood of Seville, where it nests in church-towers and ruins. Both species are well known to the country-people, who call them *Milano real* and *Milano negro*. I saw a beautiful adult specimen of the Black-winged Kite (*Elanus melanopterus*) in the hands of a bird-stuffer at Seville, in April 1865, which had been shot a few days previously in the *marisma* below Seville. It is certainly not a common species in Spain, and I did not meet with it in any museum. Of the Harriers, I distinctly made out our three British species on the Albufera of Valencia. The Marsh-Harrier (*Circus æruginosus*), in Spanish *Arpella*, is very common throughout Spain; the Hen-Harrier (*Circus cyaneus*) I often saw in the neighbourhood of Cordova, as also on the Guadalquivir below Seville. Montagu's Harrier (*Circus cineraceus*) is not, I think, common in Spain; there is a specimen in the Museum of Madrid. I did not meet with *Circus pallidus*. In conclusion, I may mention that I hope shortly to revisit Spain with the express purpose of making myself better acquainted with her ornithology; and I trust in some future Number of the 'Ibis' to be able to record my further experiences.

Lilford, March 1865.